

ATMA



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1ST ANNIVERSARY ISSUEBelur MathThe Divine Temple of Sri Ramakrishna

Belur Math is the international headquarters of **Ramakrishna Mission**. It is a place of international pilgrimage significant due to the fact that Swami Vivekananda placed the relics of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa here and envisioned a unique temple to house them.

Before his debut in the Parliament of Religions (1893) at Chicago, Swami Vivekananda had wandered about many historically important places of India looking for the signs of the greatness as well as for the reasons for the decline of her ancient culture.

Swami Vivekananda's pilgrimage took him to many parts of Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu. He must have made profuse mental notes of his observations especially on the architectural monuments like the Taj Mahal, Palaces of Rajasthan, ancient temples of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and other places. During his tour in America and Europe, he must have come across buildings of architectural importance of Modern, Medieval, Gothic and Renaissance styles.

To pay tribute to the multifaceted, all-embracing divine personality of Sri Ramakrishna, he envisioned a great edifice combining various architectural features of monuments in various parts of the world. It was Swami Vivekananda's desire that the new temple should embody the salient features of major temple architecture of different religious beliefs so that everyone who comes to the Ramakrishna Temple would feel at home and realise the underlying principle of the universal brotherhood and religion propounded by the Great Master. Three decades after the passing away of Swami Vivekananda, the idea was put into actuality by Swami Vijnanananda, another direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, with the help of M/s. Martin Burn and Company, the then famous architect builders of Calcutta. Construction was completed and consecrated on 14 January 1938.

As a visitor enters the Belur Math gate on the asphalted road to the temple, a variety of old trees camouflage the temple from his sight till about a hundred metres away, from where he gets a partial glimpse of it. The site chosen for the temple by Swami Vivekananda is right on the holy river Ganges with a clear view of two important places related to Sri Ramakrishna—Dakshineswar and Cossipore, which add to its sanctity. In a spatial tribute to the Ganges, the temple has been located parallel to its flow, sufficiently away to avoid its water from entering during high tides.

The vast green spaces on both sides of the temple and in the front with a backdrop of long simple Math office building, the Math Library and residential quarters for monks complete its setting. Not far from it are the old shrine, the remodelled Math cottage housing the room where Swami Vivekananda spent his last days and where many of the monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna stayed, and temples dedicated to Swami Brahmananda, the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda. The simple but elegant pathway leading from the entrance gate bordered with a number of huge trees and the setting against the holy Ganges with the other bank silhouetted against the morning sun presents a contrast to formal settings of many ancient monuments of India like the Taj Mahal or the Victoria Memorial of Calcutta.

Temple of Sri Ramakrishna, Belur Math



Places of Attraction at Belur Math

THE OLD SHRINE	SWAMI VIVEKANANDA’S ROOM
It is situated to the north-east of Sri Ramakrishna Temple. This was the original shrine, where daily worship was conducted from January 1899 till the new temple was consecrated. This shrine awakens the hallowed memory of Swami Vivekananda and other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna who used to worship, meditate and sing devotional songs here.	To the southeast of the old shrine stands Swami Vivekananda’s room. In this room, the great Swami lived, and here he attained Mahasamadhi on 4 July 1902. Most of the articles preserved in this room were used by him at different places and times. In the courtyard in front of this room stands a mango tree under which Swamiji used to sit on a camp cot and meet visitors and devotees.
SWAMI BRAHMANANDA TEMPLE	HOLY MOTHER SRI SARADA DEVI’S TEMPLE
Swami Brahmananda (1863-1922), whose place among the sixteen monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna is only next to that of Swami Vivekananda, was the first President of the Math and the Mission. The temple, which stands on the spot where Swami Brahmananda’s body was cremated, was dedicated in 1924.	Overlooking the wide bathing ghat stands the temple of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi (1853-1920). The temple, built on the spot where her mortal remains were consigned to flames in 1920, was consecrated on 21 December 1921. Since the Mother loved the Ganga, her temple faces this sacred river.
SWAMI VIVEKANANDA TEMPLE	THE RAMAKRISHNA MUSEUM
The temple stands on the spot where Swami Vivekananda’s mortal remains were cremated in 1902. Consecrated on 28 January 1924, the temple has in its upper storey an alabaster OM (in Bengali characters). Beside the temple stands a bel (bilva) tree in the place of the original bel tree under which Swami Vivekananda used to sit and near which, according to his wish, his body was cremated.	The Ramakrishna Museum is home to some of the objects used by Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda. It is a great place for history lovers. In this Museum, several articles and artefacts closely associated with Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda and other direct disciples of the Master have been exhibited.

–For further details please go through the website: www.belurmath.org

Excerpts from the Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna

➤ Sacred books only point out the way to God. Once you have known the way, what is the use of books? Then comes the time for the culture of the soul in solitary communion with God. A person received a letter from his village-home, asking him to send certain things to his kinsmen. When he was going to order them, he wanted to ascertain again from the letter the articles requisitioned. So he searched for the letter, which was then missing. At last, to his great delight, it was found out after a long search. He took it up eagerly, and went through the contents which ran as follows: "Please send five seers of sweetmeats, a hundred oranges and eight pieces of cloth." Knowing the contents, he threw the letter aside and set about procuring the articles.

How long then does one care for such a letter? So long as one does not know the contents. The contents being once known, the next step is to put forth the necessary effort to get the things desired. Similarly the sacred books tell us only the way to God, i.e., of the means for the realization of God. That way being known, the next step is to work one's way to the goal. Realization is the goal.

➤ Many think that knowledge of God cannot be attained except through the study of books. But higher than reading is hearing, and even higher than hearing is seeing or realizing. The hearing of the truth from the lips of the preceptor makes a greater impression on the mind than the mere reading of books; but seeing makes the greatest impression. Better than reading about Banaras is hearing about the place from the lips of one who has actually visited it; but the best is to see Banaras with one's own eyes.

➤ Utter the word Gita, in quick succession, a number of times-Gi-ta-gi-ta-gi-tagi. It is then virtually pronounced as 'Tagi', 'Tagi', which means one who has renounced the world for the sake of God. Thus, in one word, the Gita teaches, "Renounce, ye world-bound men! Renounce everything, and fix the mind on the Lord."

➤ There is necessity of money, no doubt, in worldly life; but do not ponder much over it and other material gains. Contentment with what comes of its own accord is the best attitude. Do not be anxious to hoard. Those who dedicate their very life and soul to Him, those who are His devotees and have taken refuge in Him, can never think of such worldly matters. With them, expenditure is commensurate with income. As money comes into their hands in one way, it is spent in another.

A disciple: Sir, may I try to earn a larger income?

The Master: Yes, if you mean to devote it to the life in the family based on discrimination. But take care that you earn money by honest means. For it is not earning money but the service of the Lord that is your aim; and wealth devoted to God is beyond evil.

➤ What is the state of a man who is in the world but is free from its attachments? He is like a lotus-leaf in water, or like a mud-fish in the marsh. Neither of these is polluted by the element in which it lives. The water wets not the leaf, nor does the mud stain the glossy coat of the fish.

